



Policy Analysis /

How to Use Militia Spotlight

by [Michael Knights](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Knights](#)

Michael Knights is the Boston-based Jill and Jay Bernstein Fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states.



Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight](#)

Militia Spotlight provides rapid, high-quality analysis and contextualization of militia activities in Iraq and Syria.

Welcome to Militia Spotlight, a research blog created by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. The purpose of this blog is to provide a resource for government officials, journalists, lawyers, and citizens affected by militia violence in Iraq and Syria.

Iran-backed militias are using online propaganda in an increasingly sophisticated manner. They deliberately spread disinformation in an effort to distort public opinion. These militias use "facade" groups—anonymous online brands—to deflect blame when they act illegally or in ways that might weaken their appeal. One of their objectives is to create a post-truth environment in which they dominate online spaces as a means to control society.

Militia Spotlight adopts the approach of the late U.S. Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis, who coined the phrase “sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.” Detailed observation of militias can yield actionable evidence to support legal cases, sanctions policy, and other actions.

Militia Spotlight will post interesting pieces of evidence that tie militia actors together and demonstrate their involvement in specific activities. Other research alerts will highlight new trends in militia tactics, networks, and hierarchies.

Alongside these alerts, Militia Spotlight will develop [a set of profiles](#) that keep track of militias and their facade brands. These living documents will give journalists and analysts an accessible resource with which to quickly establish the affiliations and track record of specific militia brands.

Militia Spotlight entries live alongside many other Washington Institute research products on militias inside Iraq and Syria, including [book-length analyses](#), [reports](#), [PolicyWatches and Policy Alerts](#), and [databases](#).

If you have detailed insights to share on militia activities in Iraq and Syria, Militia Spotlight is keen to hear from you. Send an email to militiaspotlight@washingtoninstitute.org with your information or blog ideas. ❖



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